

benefits of current information, education, and a forceful advocate on State and Federal issues.

Ongoing activities and constant public contact continues to make the National Federation of the Blind of Kentucky a united force. Their efforts have distinguished Kentucky as a leader throughout the country for its research and promotion of technology assisting visually impaired users in obtaining highly sought after computer jobs.

As times change, so do biases and expectations. This year the U.S. Senate saw a staffer join us on the floor to assist with important legislation. While this is not unusual, it was unusual to see this aid assisted by her guide dog. This same aid and guide dog assisted my office a little over a year ago.

I would never say the road that Reagan and other visually impaired Kentuckians have traveled was an easy one to travel, but a necessary journey to benefit generations to come. As friends and family gather today and tomorrow, it will not only be a time to reflect on the past, but toward the future.

I am proud to stand before you and say the world is changing for the better. I know you will join me in congratulating the National Federation of the Blind of Kentucky for 50 years of dedication and service in our quest for a better future.

TRIBUTE TO JOE R. CHRISTIAN

Mr. FORD. Mr. President, I am pleased to have the honor today of paying tribute to Joe R. Christian who will be retiring on August 19 from the U.S. Capitol Police after 20 years of service to the force.

As the officer on duty with the Capitol Third Division, Joe has given Members and staff of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence a sense of safety and well-being that few others could. His warm smile, good sense of humor and welcoming words have endeared him to his colleagues as well.

Officer Joe Christian has demonstrated that he is a true Kentuckian by his commitment to serving the public good. While he may no longer live in the Commonwealth, Joe has roots back home in Elkton, KY. I know that his friends and family there are proud of his service to the U.S. Capitol Police and his service to the U.S. Navy. Joe joined the Navy at 18 and for over 20 years, he flew all over the world with different squadrons, earning an Honorable Discharge as well as a Good Conduct Medal with a five oak leaf cluster.

I am proud of Joe, too, and extend my best wishes to him as he begins this new phase of his life.

SUPREME COURT JUSTICE WILLIAM BRENNAN

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, last week this Nation lost a true American hero with the passing of former Su-

preme Court Justice William Brennan. The contributions of William Brennan to our democratic way of life are many and will continue, long after his passing, to touch the lives of people all across this Nation in the most important and fundamental ways. Always a staunch and unrelenting defender of individual liberty, William Brennan helped to preserve many important rights that each of us, as Americans, enjoy today. He fought relentlessly to preserve the right to vote, the right to free expression, and the right to be treated as an equal with your fellow citizens. His legacy is one that honors the fundamental notion that in America, the individual truly does matter.

In terms of length of service on the Supreme Court and number of opinions written, William Brennan ranks near the top. However, to reduce his career to these simple numbers is to diminish the scope and importance of William Brennan in shaping this Nation's constitutional law. Many of Brennan's most significant decisions were decided by narrow margins and it is a testament not only to the undeniability of Justice Brennan's often cited Irish charm, but also to the power of his intellect that he could draw diverse Justices together to support important decisions which he drafted. In this regard, he may never be equaled.

Mr. President, there are many reasons to admire and respect William Brennan. He was a man of enormous dignity and compassion. His intellect and reasoning, second to none. Although there are many areas which one could point to in order to highlight the greatness of William Brennan, I will note just two that are significant to me. First, his unrelenting defense of the first amendment right to free expression. Because of William Brennan, the media in this Nation retains the right to criticize the government, to show the American people what goes on in their elected bodies—in other words, to hold us accountable. Absent this right, the credibility of our democracy and our form of government would be, in my opinion, greatly diminished. William Brennan understood that if the first amendment was to mean anything, it must protect that expression which was not popular. In upholding the first amendment in regard to flag desecration, Justice Brennan wrote that;

If there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the Government may not prohibit expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable.

In typical Brennan fashion, his opinion was joined by four colleagues of diverse perspectives, Justices Marshall, Blackmun, Kennedy, and Scalia.

In regard to capital punishment, Brennan remained steadfastly opposed. Although he acknowledged that his view was the minority, he maintained until the end that the death penalty was violative of the eighth amendment prohibition on cruel and unusual pun-

ishment. In his estimation, a system which treated human beings as nonhuman or objects simply to be toyed with and disregarded was simply not protected by the U.S. Constitution. In the wake of Justice Brennan's death I am reminded that just a few short weeks ago, a Member of the House of Representatives who supports the death penalty, stated on a national news program that someday in America we will execute an innocent person. He argued that while we don't want to do that, and will try to prevent it, it is an inevitable consequence of having capital punishment. This is a staggering, yet candid, statement which I think, makes Justice Brennan's point in a very stark and chilling way. Justice Brennan may well have been on the minority on capital punishment Mr. President, that is not to say however, that his position was incorrect.

Mr. President, there is no question that Justice Brennan was a man that I admired. His opinions were reasoned, intelligent, and always consistent with the notion that in America the rights of the individual, no matter his or her background, upbringing, political ideology, or religious beliefs, mattered. That simple, yet often overlooked notion is the foundation of our democracy and was the cornerstone of Justice Brennan's approach to the law. He was truly the most influential Justice of his time. And while I certainly add my name to the list of those who mourn his passing, I also join those who celebrate the richness of his life and the countless opinions which helped improve the lot of millions of Americans. Ours is a better Nation because of William Brennan.

However, Mr. President, the greatest measure of William Brennan is not one taken from afar—from simply reading his opinions or following the public persona—but from those closest to him, his family, friends, and those who sat with him on the bench. In this regard the comments of his colleagues are telling. Justice Souter called Brennan the most fearlessly principled guardian of the Constitution that has ever lived. Justice Scalia, a jurist often at philosophical odds with Brennan called him the most influential Justice of this century. Justice Kennedy called him a great friend of freedom, not only for those who enjoy freedom, but also those who seek it. Justice Clarence Thomas was quoted recently as saying that there simply isn't a more decent or brilliant human being than William Brennan. From these great jurists of diverse backgrounds and ideological perspective, the message is the same; William Brennan's contribution was undeniable, important, and lasting. It is not surprising Mr. President, that even in saying good-bye, Justice Brennan has once again forged a diverse coalition.

THE VERY BAD DEBT BOXSCORE

Mr. HELMS. Mr. President, at the close of business yesterday, Wednesday, July 30, 1997, the Federal debt